From nonsense to openness : Wittgenstein on moral sense

Backström, Joel

Routledge
2018

Backström , J 2018 , From nonsense to openness : Wittgenstein on moral sense . in E Dain þÿ& R Agam-Segal (eds) , Wittgenstein s Moral Thought . Routledge Stud þÿMoral Theory , Routledge , pp. 247 275 . https://doi.org/10.4324/97813

http://hdl.handle.net/10138/323981
https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315180762

acceptedVersion

Chapter published in E. Dain & R. Agam-Segal (eds.), *Wittgenstein's Moral Thought.* Routledge, forthcoming 2017

From nonsense to openness – Wittgenstein on moral sense

Joel Backström

It is commonly assumed, especially in philosophy, that the "responsible moral agent" is defined by their "ability to grasp and apply moral reasons" (Wallace 1996: 1); that being moral means "acting from reasons that in principle can be offered in explanation and justification of what we do" (Herman 2007: 117). Wittgenstein disagrees. What, in the *Lecture on Ethics* from 1929, he calls the "absolute" dimension of ethics is in some important sense indescribable, and attempts at justifying one's responses by appeal to reasons produce only "nonsense" or "chatter" (LE: 8–12; Waismann 1965: 13; TLP 6.421).[1]

This chapter explains what I believe is true and crucial in Wittgenstein's suggestion, but also what I see as confused in his formulation of it. Sections 1–2 outline the *Lecture's* view of the "absolute" and suggest that the problematic aspects of Wittgenstein's early ethics are symptoms of his failure to articulate the fundamental ethical and philosophical role of the relation to *the other person*. Section 3 shows how his later thinking moves decisively in just that direction and how the very idea of ethics is reframed and radicalised when set within his later account of human understanding as a *responsive openness between us*, itself ethical in a broad yet precise sense to be explained. Section 4 explains how moral difficulties are, as Wittgenstein emphasises, radically different from merely intellectual problems (which *can* be reasoned about) because they demand a change in ourselves which we resist even acknowledging. Section 5 shows how, as Wittgenstein indicates, standard representational, but also more broadly public-performative views of language misrepresent ethics and language in their intertwinement. The heart of the ethical is neither public nor private; it is *between us*. It cannot be represented but it can be, indeed cannot but be, expressed – with moral life pervasively deformed, however, by our attempts at *repressing* this inevitable expression through moral misrepresentations, in more or less "rational" or "emotional" registers.

[1] For the abbreviations used in referring to Wittgenstein's writings, see the list of references. I have sometimes modified extant translations (using SS, BEE and GBW/CC).

1. Absolute nonsense?

In the *Lecture on Ethics*, Wittgenstein contrasts two uses of evaluative expressions, the "trivial or relative" and the "ethical or absolute sense" (LE: 5). The former is about "coming up to a certain predetermined standard"; being a *good* pianist means that one "can play pieces of a certain degree of difficulty with a certain degree of dexterity", this road is the *right* one "relative to a certain goal", etc. (ibid.) According to Wittgenstein, "this is not how Ethics uses [these expressions]" (ibid.). Thus, a bad tennis player might be satisfied with playing at her current level, not caring to improve, but if someone confronted about telling a "preposterous lie" responded that he simply didn't care to behave better, we would absolutely refuse to accept this (ibid.).

The point is that perceiving a situation as morally charged means feel claimed in response by the perception of what the person(s) in the situation do and suffer. One's response isn't, basically, a product of reasoning, inference or decision, but is given in one's very perception, one's sense of the interpersonal significance of the situation, and whatever reasoning or decisions that may follow respond and are answerable to this immediate understanding. Think, e.g., of seeing children's play turn into bullying. This very perception claims you, makes you responsible for what transpires between the children next; you may be unsure what to do, and may even conclude that intervening directly would only make matters worse, but you're not free to just ignore the children. Certainly, you may make some excuse to look the other way – "They're just joking around" etc. – but your very excuse testifies to the responsibility you feel, which the excuse is meant to obfuscate. (We'll return to the sense in which speaking of *certain* situations only as "morally charged" is quite misleading.)

In the *Lecture* Wittgenstein doesn't elaborate on this "grammar" of moral situations, however, but adduces two other, for him paradigmatic experiences. The first is "wonder at the existence of the world", which inclines him to "use such phrases as 'how extraordinary that anything should exist'"; the second is "the experience of feeling *absolutely* safe," by which he means "the state of mind in which one is inclined to say 'I am safe, nothing can injure me whatever happens'" (LE: 8). Later, he suggests that religious people mark "exactly" the same experiences when they say that "God has created the world", or that they "feel safe in the hands of God", and that, furthermore, the experience of "feeling guilty" – or, in religious terms, feeling condemned by God – is akin to these (LE: 10).

These examples may seem quite irrelevant to *ethics*, their possible psychological, religious or biographical interest notwithstanding (cf. Malcolm 1958: 70; McGuiness 1966: 327–8). After all, they offer no "action-

guidance", and one can hardly demand that people have such (apparently) extraordinary experiences, or blame them if they don't! To see the misunderstanding in reducing the ethical to action-guidance, consider that someone may always "do right", yet their whole life may be wrong. That is, their actions may be irreproachable in the superficial, legalistic sense of conforming to various "moral rules" (helping others, not lying etc.), yet the spirit they manifest, the motives driving them – e.g., conformism or a pharisaic wish to justify oneself – may render them morally corrupt and destructive. Rather than focusing on particular "principles" or "rules" for action, then, ethics needs to consider the spirit in which we act; which means, how we relate to others and to ourselves in that relation. But that means considering general orientations to life – and often: *dis*orientations *of* life. A vain or vindictive spirit, say, isn't something that could be there on just one occasion, with no connection to anything else. Thus, "absolute" responses might be relevant for ethics precisely *because* they aren't specific attitudes to particular things, but expressions of a global orientation to life; to others.

I will not discuss the particular ideas of absolute safety and wonder further in this chapter, but I will return (in Section 4) to the importance of general orientations in ethics. Now we must consider the *Lecture's* central claim and difficulty: the idea, emphasised already in the *Tractatus*, that absolute ethical responses are inexpressible, beyond sense-making language (TLP 6.4–6.421). Wittgenstein's examples are meant, he says, to help his audience "recall the same or similar experiences, so that we may have a common ground for our investigation" (LE: 8). He immediately adds, though, that "the verbal expression which we give to these experiences is nonsense"; in his exclamations of wonder and safety he was "misusing language" (ibid.). For "in ordinary life", being safe means that "*such-and-such* cannot happen", e.g. one is safe from traffic-hazards when in one's room, and so "it's nonsense to say that I am safe *whatever* happens" (LE: 9). Similarly, one may wonder at things – perhaps a particularly striking view or a sudden blue sky – being this-way-rather-than-that, but wondering at the sheer existence of the world can, Wittgenstein says, be given no sense (LE: 8–9). In short, because absolute expressions fail to mark any identifiable contrast between things in the world being thus or so, "nonsensicality is their very essence"; in voicing them we want "*to go beyond* the world and that is to say beyond significant language" (LE: 11–12).

But if so, Wittgenstein seems to have undermined the "common ground" he hoped to establish, for "it" appears to consist of experiences of which no-one can say what they are. Furthermore: how could anyone even know they had these supposed experiences? How could one, say, distinguish the feeling of safety from that of wonder? And how did one ever come to feel a need for using just *those* words, "safety", and "wonder" – and not, say "anxiety" or "indifference" – if they were unable to express anything of the character of these experiences? In the *Lecture*, Wittgenstein is unfazed by such paradoxes; he insists on

them. It is, he says, "perfectly, absolutely hopeless" to say anything meaningful about "the absolute good" – and yet the urge to do so shows "a tendency in the human mind which [he] personally cannot help respecting deeply" (LE: 12). He rejects the positivist reduction of ethical utterances to "mere expressions of feeling", about which only psychological and sociological questions can sensibly be asked (cf. Ayer 1964: 112), as ethically irrelevant, because socio-psychological descriptions contain only "facts, facts, and facts but no Ethics" (LE: 6-7).[2]

What, then, is one to make of the paradoxical idea of an inexpressible absolute? Is Wittgenstein gesturing at ineffable ethical experiences and truths, where what he *means* is "quite correct, only it cannot be said" (Hacker 1986, 26)?[3] But, again, how could one mean what one cannot express? On the other hand, if absolute utterances really are simple nonsense which don't even gesture at any meaning, why does Wittgenstein think that recognising their emptiness "does not involve their losing their attractiveness, their capacity to make us feel that they express the sense we want to make" (Diamond 2000: 161)? How could a person's intention in speaking absolutely "be frustrated by his sentence's making sense" (ibid.: 163; cf. Donatelli 2005)? I cannot make anything of this suggestion, but I think I can see how the wish to reject certain confused pictures of moral meaning, combined with failure to see any alternative, might drive one towards it.

To my knowledge, Wittgenstein never explicitly revisited the *Lecture's* framing of the absolute/relative-distinction, but he spoke about ethical questions in what the *Lecture* would have called absolute terms – often using religious idioms – until the end of his life.[4] He doesn't, however, characterise his later remarks as *nonsensical*, although he continues to emphasise as strongly as ever that they neither state checkable facts nor provide explanations or justifications for anything.[5] Wittgenstein apparently came to see his earlier insistence on their nonsensicality as, in effect, arbitrarily promoting *one* kind of language-use, the empirical and scientific, to the norm of the meaningful: "our words will *only* express facts".[6] As he says, while he was right to protest "against the overvaluation of science", manifested for instance in the notion

---

[2] Wittgenstein's thinking has no affinity to contemporary neo-emotivism, which presents moral reasoning as mere *post-facto* rationalisation of evolutionarily hard-wired gut reactions (e.g. Greene 2014, Haidt 2001). He is no ethical irrationalist, but points to an elemental dimension where contrasts like rational/irrational or reasonable/emotional lack application. And we should also note that responses are *unjustified* only if justification could and should have been given – but that, Wittgenstein claims, is precisely not the case regarding the ethical.

[3] Hacker isn't speaking for himself, but formulating what he claims was Wittgenstein's *Tractarian* view.

[4] Cf. the last pages of the chronologically ordered CV: 85–7.

[5] See e.g. CV: 28–33; 53; 61; 71-73; 85–7, etc.

[6] LE: 7; cf. TLP 6.53, and the later, critical remarks in PI §§23–4, 65–7; Z §444, etc.

that ethics could be "explained" scientifically, he later realised that his protest unwittingly reinforced precisely this scientistic "idol worship", for "using the word 'science' for 'everything that can be said that is not nonsense' already expresses this overestimation [of science]".[7] The philosopher shouldn't privilege particular forms of thinking, but make perspicuous the radically different modes of possible sense-making; for instance, clarify *what* someone who uses "absolute" idioms is trying to say, while always remembering that "the *words* you utter […] are not what matters, so much as the difference they make at various points in your life" (CV: 85; cf. PI II:iv). The point isn't to note or celebrate differences as such, but to uncover our "urge to misunderstand" what we are actually doing in speaking and thinking in our different ways (PI §109). That is, insofar as ethics is at issue, the task is to challenge our own insistent temptations to ignore or obscure specific ethical possibilities.

Wittgenstein came to see, then, that his early work had been "bewitched" (PI §109) by certain preconceptions which obscured what it actually means to "consider the context of significant use [of our words]", as he had himself programmatically insisted we do already in the *Tractatus* (TLP 3.326–8; cf. PI §89 ff.; Conant 1998 and 2006). These preconceptions lie behind Wittgenstein's failure, in the *Lecture*, to properly clarify the distinction between absolute and relative expressions marked in it, and give his remarks there a strangely abstract and indefinite quality, their earnestness and intensity notwithstanding. The root problem here isn't a narrow, prejudiced view of language, privileging scientific or fact-stating language-use, however. That is only a symptom of, or variation on, the more basic difficulty to which I now turn: the way early Wittgenstein's perspective ignores, or rather represses, *the relation to the other person*.

2. The other in my way

Wittgenstein's starting-point in the *Tractatus* appears solipsistic: "I am my world"; "the world is *my* world" (TLP 5.63; 5.62). Similarly, in the absolute experiences focused on in the *Lecture* "*I* wonder at the existence of the world," "*I* feel absolutely safe". There seems to be no *you* here, only a transcendental *I* contemplating *its* world "*sub specie aeterni* […] as a limited whole", thus engendering a sense of "the

[7] *Ms* 134, 145 [14 Apr, 1947], quoted and translated in Cahill (2004: 54–5). The phrase "idol worship", however, is taken from LA: 27. – Wittgenstein doesn't object to science as such but to "the *spirit* in which science is carried on nowadays" (CV: 5); to the intellectually and existentially confused expectations pervasively invested in it.

mystical" (TLP 6.45).[8] In the early *Notebooks* Wittgenstein discusses the possible ethical role of the other person. "Can there be any ethics if there is no living being but myself", he asks, and answers:

> If ethics is supposed to be something fundamental, there can. [...]
> For [...] a world in which there is only dead matter is in itself neither good nor evil, so even the world of living things can in itself be neither good nor evil.
> Good and evil only enter through the *subject*. And the subject is not part of the world, but a limit of the world. (NB 2.8.16)
> What is good and evil is essentially the I, not the world. (NB 5.8.16)

Now there is *one* sense in which good and evil might indeed be said to "enter only through the *subject*". Consider the difference between someone accidentally falling to their death and being pushed down by another: the first event is a tragedy, but in the second there entered the *evil* of one human being murdering another. However, as this example reminds us, contrary to Wittgenstein's early conception, good and evil don't lie simply or merely in the "attitude of the subject to *the world*" (NB 4.11.16, emphasis added), but paradigmatically in the subject's way of relating – murderously, in this case – to someone else, to another living being. Furthermore, the wrongness of murder cannot be understood apart from the significance of life and death as such; someone who had no compassion for victims of natural or accidental death and their bereaved wouldn't see the terribleness of murder, either. Returning to our earlier example, we should similarly note that moral meaning doesn't suddenly appear when children's play turns into bullying. One perceives and is concerned with the bullying only insofar as one also perceives the joy of the children's play that went before; both perceptions, and the understanding of the difference in their meaning, are aspects of one's understanding of and openness to *the children*. The bullying-situation is "morally charged", acute, in a different way from the situation of joyful play insofar as it demands an intervention on one's part, but it's the same moral understanding that makes one perceive both the terror of the bullying and the goodness of the play before.

Early Wittgenstein, however, tends to ignore the crucial connections between ethics, understanding and the relationship to the other, and to present one's relation to other people, and what happens to them, as merely particular configurations of facts among others, all equally "accidental" and so of "no value" (TLP 6.41; cf. 5.634 and NB 12.10.16). What matters ethically, he attempts to convince himself, is one's own personal relation to the world as a whole: "In order to live happily I must be in agreement with the world. And that is what 'being happy' means" (NB 8.7.16). Happiness means living "in the present", i.e. "without

[8] We return to the question whether the *Tractatus* ultimately endorses this solipsism at the end of this section.

fear and hope" (NB 14.7.16), wishing for nothing, for one cannot "wish for something and yet not be unhappy if the wish does not attain fulfilment" (NB 29.7.16). Happiness, thus, means accepting whatever happens without protest, for "*How* the world is, is completely indifferent for what is higher" (TLP 6.432). The trouble with this idea is that it isn't ethically good, but the greatest evil to remain indifferent to whether good or ill befalls others. Fearing for an ill child's life, you hope with all your heart she can be saved; if she dies you'll be devastated. What this shows isn't that one should wish for nothing, but that aiming for a state of wishing for nothing is an evil confusion, for that would mean extinguishing one's love for the child. Love certainly includes the endeavour to love ever more wholeheartedly, and this means freeing oneself from the various destructive and egocentric wishes and fears that hamper one's love (e.g., the wish that one's child become a source of pride for oneself; "An academic, just like her Daddy!"). But the wish that the other's life go well – *not*: that it go according to *my* wishes – is itself part of love, not anything love should be purged of. [9]

Early Wittgenstein knows that he is confused about these things; he interrupts some brief and disorganised jottings on how to conceive "loving one's neighbour" from his general perspective by the exclamation: "Here I am still making crude mistakes! No doubt of that!" (NB 29.7.16) His problems here aren't idiosyncratic or mere youthful misunderstandings, however. The basic difficulty he struggles with is one shared with most of our tradition of philosophy (and theology). For the question of love, moved centre stage in our Judeo-Christian culture through the Biblical focus on the love of neighbour, is one our philosophers (and theologians) cannot simply forget, yet have never quite known how to "deal" with. They have tried, impossibly, to force the question into a basically Greek philosophical frame, where there's no neighbour, only "*the* subject" (singular) – in the guise of, say, the *sage*, the *cogito*, the *scientific observer* or the *moral agent* – facing and "making pictures" of "the world" (cf. TLP 2.1). Certainly, on this "Greek" conception the world "contains" other people, too, *among other things*, and a running debate concerns the role of others in determining the subject's duties and possibilities for happiness, with some (like early Wittgenstein) speaking for detachment, as goal or predicament, while others see human intercourse and human attachment as a fundamental need and/or duty (cf. Nussbaum 2001).

However, this debate is premised on both sides ignoring – in the "decisive movement" of this philosophical "conjuring trick" (cf. PI §308) – the heart of the matter, which is that *you* are no mere *part* of "my" world; not even the most important, the most urgently needed, part. In a sense, I *imagine* you that way, as an

[9] I'm not suggesting that one shouldn't wish that one's own life go well, only wish well for the other. The falsity of that kind of "self-effacement" is obvious from the child-example, for an absolutely crucial aspect of both the child's life and my life, as her parent, going well, is that we can be together in love. In this sense, her good isn't, in general, separable from mine.

element in “my” world – or in “our” world; the world of the collective with which I identify – insofar as I give myself over to private or collective projects, emotions and calculations, which means that I flee the challenging, strictly personal encounter with you into the safely depersonalised realm of the private/subjective and public/collective (these are aspects of the same movement). But you are not a mere part of my world; I don’t actually *experience* you the way I *imagine* you. And the philosophical confusion of pretending otherwise is only an echo on the theoretical level of this moral-existential confusion in real life.[10]

Think of being irritated and in a hurry; in an attitude which reduces the world to a place where *I* have to get from A to B, and others seem only to *be in my way*. Suppose that in this state, ruthlessly rushing down the street, I brutally order a child out of the way. Seeing the bewildered, frightened look on the child’s face or just hearing the viciousness in my own voice may stop me in my tracks, suddenly revealing to me the blindness, the callousness, of my demeanour. Note that it makes no moral difference whether the aim I was hurrying towards was private gain or self-sacrifice for some noble cause; *what* blinded me to the other is indifferent, what I now see is *that* I blinded myself to her. That is: what I now see is *her*. What is revealed to me couldn’t be formulated in any specific maxim (“Always pay kind attention to children, even when in a hurry”). Rather, what I’m recalled to is the fact that this isn’t “my” world; the child isn’t “an obstacle in my way”. It’s only because of the elemental sense of openness to the other made vivid, for me, in that experience, that there *is* anything like morality, that there is good and evil – or, for that matter, that there is anything like a human world at all.

However, even before the scales fell from my eyes, my very irritation *showed* very clearly what it blinded *me* to, for I was irritated precisely by the *people* who were, I felt, “in my way”, while the lamp-posts I simply treated as what they are, when you’re in a hurry: obstacles to be avoided. Like other modes of rejecting and closing oneself to another person – envy, disgust, hatred, etc., etc. – irritation is an essentially ambivalent response in which one is, at bottom, enraged by one’s own openness to and concern for the other. If you’re very irritated with someone, her presence in the room may feel quite unbearable to you; the smallest sound she makes destroys your concentration completely, and if she makes no sound at all you get even more enraged. Your whole demeanour shows that you’re completely obsessed by this person who you *officially* tell yourself you’d “want nothing to do with”. She doesn’t get in your way; *you* seek her out obsessively, in a desperate perversion of the way love seeks out the beloved, never having enough of her. Irritation with another gets its *irritating* character from this ambivalence; it’s a “hopeless running against

[10] On private/collective depersonalisation, see Backström and Nykänen (2016) and Nykänen (2014), and on the relation between philosophical and everyday confusion, Backström (2011) and (2013).

the walls of your cage", to adopt Wittgenstein's image (LE: 12). But the appearance of being caged in arises only from fantasising escape; in loving one's neighbour, rather than destructively closing oneself to her, one experiences her presence as gift, not as prison.

Most of our philosophical tradition fails to thematise the relation to the other, or gives it only an essentially subordinate ("Greek") role.[11] Unavoidably, it shows up in our discussions nonetheless, in the way other people appear in one's irritation: as irritants, as what is impatiently brushed aside but secretly presupposed as the heart of intelligibility in every thought and action. Some commentators read the *Tractatus* – and, presumably, Wittgenstein's *Lecture* as well – as pointing to this repressed dimension; as aiming to overcome the solipsism they apparently espouse, with the very act of reading/listening to the *author* of their nonsensical "claims" placing us, finally, in a second-personal, ethical perspective.[12] I find such readings more ingenious than convincing. I cannot argue for this judgment here, but let me just mention two simple points. First, the fact that love of neighbour hovers as a problem in the background – as I have suggested it must inevitably do, more or less close to the surface of any philosophical text – and that there are even distinct echoes of Tolstoy and of Christian mystics in Wittgenstein's early writings,[13] doesn't show that articulating "the moral perspective of selfless love" was his central concern (Dilman 1974: 181) or that he – or for that matter Tolstoy or the mystics! – succeeded in illuminating the nature and philosophical importance of the relation to the neighbour. Secondly, one can in some sense doubtless say, as Wittgenstein famously did,[14] that "the point of the [*Tractatus*] is ethical", and in some sense the *Lecture*, rather than offering a thesis about ethics for theoretical debate, clearly tries to convince us to *stop* theorising about ethics and thus to help us see and face reality, ethically speaking (Waismann 1965: 13). But it doesn't follow that early Wittgenstein is clear about what his ethical aim involves; what ethical reality is and what may distract one from it. And reflecting on, struggling to understand, what is ethically speaking real and what illusion doesn't mean *theorising* about it!

I won't enter further into the debate about Wittgenstein's early ethics here. Instead, I will argue that the radical core of Wittgenstein's *later* thought lies in bringing the openness between us into focus in a way

---

[11] Levinas (1981), and before him Buber (2002) and the other "philosophers of dialogue" (cf. Theunissen 1977), made this their central task (which isn't to say that their thematisation is adequate; cf. the critique of Levinas in Backström 2007: 183–192). As I will suggest, later Wittgenstein also reorients his thinking around the relation to the other person, although he doesn't state this programmatically.

[12] For variants on this type of *Tractatus*-reading, see Friedlander (2001: 153–8); Kremer (2004); Overgaard (2007). Levy (2007) offers a similar reading of the *Lecture*.

[13] Cf. Baum (1979), Kremer (2004), Wolz-Gottwald (2001).

[14] Undated letter to L. von Ficker, written sometime after 20.10.1919 (GBW/CC).

that allows a reframing and clarification of ethics itself. From this new perspective moral speech loses its nonsensical appearance, even though moral sense remains as radically distinct from reasoning and justification as early Wittgenstein claimed it was. In fact, the *meaning* of the distinction between reasoning and moral sense can only now be clearly seen and, incidentally, sense can be made of (or given to) some of Wittgenstein's early remarks, whose ethical point remained enigmatic within the frame of his early thought.

3. The openness between us

Wittgenstein explicitly characterised his early ethics as "supernatural" (LE, 7; cf. CV, 3) and, as noted, he spoke in "absolute" and apparently religious terms about ethical and existential questions throughout his life. What, however, is the philosophical significance of this fact? On a standard reading of his *later* work: none. Wittgenstein's ethical views are wholly a matter of personal conviction, disconnected from his (supposed) central philosophical teaching that things make sense only within shared "language games" and "forms of life" which, part of "the natural history of human beings", are historically evolved and variable, and none of which provide an absolute, or supernatural, perspective on the others. That *some* people speak, like Wittgenstein, in absolute terms is part of particular ethical or religious forms of life, and has no claim to special *philosophical* status (cf. Johnston 2014, Phillips 1992, Rhees 1965). On this view, the apparent absence of explicitly ethical discussions from the *Philosophical Investigations* might be thought to register Wittgenstein's realisation that philosophy can say nothing about substantive moral questions; he is silent on ethics "because, as he had said all along, it is not possible to say anything about them" (Richter 2004: 140). Simultaneously, it is assumed (e.g. Redpath 1972, Rhees 1990, Walker 1968) that Wittgenstein's later, broader conception of language renders innocuous the idea of the meaningfulness of everyday (as opposed to philosophical) ethical judgments, whose status had seemed uncertain, to say the least, on his earlier view. Furthermore, his later conception is taken to allow for non-substantive, *morally neutral* philosophical descriptions of the general character of moral language-use and of the evaluative sensibilities of particular communities (which, of course, leave more or less room for variations in the responses of different individuals). On this view, valuable lessons for a descriptive philosophical ethics might be culled from "just about everything" in Wittgenstein's later work *but* his explicit remarks on ethics, which are best "cheerfully laid to one side" (Little 2001: 164).

I agree that the significance of Wittgenstein's later work for ethics cannot be confined to or read off from the scattered *Nachlass*-remarks that seem overtly to be about ethical (or religious) matters, but is to be

found in the central concern of that work, in the distinctive way it approaches the problematic of language and human understanding generally. However, I disagree sharply with the standard view of that concern which, as I will explain, ignores precisely the ethical core of the matter. Alas, the standard view seems more entrenched than ever, because it fits so comfortably with the naturalistic temper of the times which wants to place morality (like everything else) squarely in "a world without marvels" (Railton 2004: 266). The endeavour is to "avert the threat of supernaturalism" by ensuring that ethical insight doesn't "require breaking out of a specific cultural inheritance into an undistorted contact with the real" (McDowell 2009: 262; 37). The background assumption of this pervasive naturalism is that being "a moral agent [just] is to be sensitive to certain [culturally evolved] standards" (Taylor 1985: 102). This places all of morality in what Wittgenstein's *Lecture* calls the *relative* dimension, where "good" indeed "simply means coming up to a certain predetermined standard", and being a good human being becomes, in principle, as culturally relative a matter as being a good pianist (LE: 5). Judgements are relative to "predetermined" standards, but these standards are relative to time and place. Since moral criticism of one's culture is obviously possible, we must somehow, on this view, be able to "acquire standards which we turn against the society that taught them to us" (Ryan 1993: 54). I will not here discuss the question of how this is supposed to be possible; the crucial thing to note is that, whether in critical or conformist modes, morality is here conceived as *wholly relative to socially produced standards*.[15]

This may seem unobjectionable, indeed inescapable. However, appearances change when one reflects that, while in one sense children "learn to be moral" as they are introduced into various forms of life with their norms and sensibilities, in another sense morality is not learnt at all; rather, the very activity of teaching children anything, including language and norms, presupposes a certain moral relation between child and teacher. Thus, teaching a child to feel ashamed of particular behaviours (belching at table, say), presupposes the child's propensity to respond to your shaming, your rebukes and frowns by feeling ashamed. If *that response to you* were lacking, you couldn't teach it; your rebukes might baffle the child or frighten it, but wouldn't make it ashamed. In one sense, this is obvious, and has often been noted by philosophers. However, noting a fact is one thing; seeing its full philosophical implications is another. In particular, reducing the point at issue to the triviality that all teaching requires a natural susceptibility in the

[15] An index of naturalism's dominance is that, while Kant's *main* point is that ethics *cannot* be "naturalised", contemporary Kantians want to "be naturalists while preserving the moral and psychological richness of Kant" (Velleman 2006: 15), making what they take to be the "force and content of Kant's doctrine" available within "the canons of a reasonable empiricism" (Rawls 1977: 165). Lovibond (1983 and 2002) and McDowell (1998, and quotes in the text above) are influential attempts at a naturalist-cum-culturalist appropriation of Wittgenstein for ethics, and Wiggins (2004) reads Wittgenstein's *Lecture* in the same vein; contrast the very different responses of Drury (1984) and Holland (1980). The difficulty of thinking clearly about naturalism and the role of culture in ethics shows, for instance, in the interminable struggles with the question in Winch (1972 and 1987) and Gaita (2004).

learner, masks the crucial point that deep, pervasive *conflict* rather than smooth articulation characterises the relation between cultural-moral formation and the untaught interpersonal moral responsiveness which the culture doesn't just form and elaborate but, utilising trans-cultural reactions such as shame, also *deforms and represses*. (Shame itself is a response directly tied to repression, and thus as *problematic* as it is pervasive.)[16]

Moral standards don't primarily curb our egoism, although they often *also* do that. Through provoking and channelling reactions of shame, (self)disgust etc., "moral education" regiments our spontaneous expressions of concern and love, attempting to define the "kinds" of contact "allowed" between different "kinds" of people – men and women, free and slaves, etc. – thus "*limiting* the infinity which opens in the ethical relationship of man to man" (Levinas 1985: 80, emphasis added). In short: in internalising the values and norms of collective moralities children learn morally destructive, sinister ways of responding even as good responses are also encouraged and *certain* destructive ones discouraged. Typically, the very same norm functions both for good and ill. Thus, learning to respect other people's property serves a good cause insofar as it protects weaker parties against the heedless greed of the stronger, but the same norm allows the strong callously to invoke their "moral right" to their possessions while the weak perish. Now, *what* is good and evil in culturally relative moralities obviously cannot be decided by appeal to those moralities themselves; it is seen, I suggest, only in the light of the untaught moral understanding that arises and develops in the encounter between particular human beings. A well-known literary illustration is the case of Huckleberry Finn, whose encounter with the runaway slave-boy Jim revealed to him the sinister aspect of the moral values he had been taught; respect for property (*Jim* being the property here), gratitude (to Jim's owner, miss Watson), loyalty (to one's slaveholding people), etc. Huck's case shows how the socially determined duties of "my station" may all be revealed to me as moral evasions in relation to another person – to *you, here* – even if, *socially* speaking, in terms of standards and norms, it's plain where my duties lie; they all speak *against you*. This is one central way in which, as the *Tractatus* says, "all the facts", that is, all the apparent moral facts produced by the culture's moral order, are "part of the [ethical] task, not of its performance" (TLP 6.4321; cf. McManus 2006: 229).[17]

The idea of an untaught moral responsiveness to others sounds suspect, indeed impossible, to philosophers who assume that our "access" to reality, including our perception of other human beings, is itself always

[16] I cannot discuss shame further here, but see Backström (2007: 466–81).

[17] The pervasive destructive aspect of social morality is obvious, yet generally ignored by philosophers; if it's noted at all, it tends to be shoved aside as a mere anomaly, which obviously it isn't. Nietzsche is a – very problematic – exception. Cf. Backström and Nykänen (2016); Backström (2015 and 2007, the latter with discussion of Huck Finn at pp. 240–3; 339–44; 354–6).

conceptually mediated, hence structured by cultural norms, and that acquiring moral understanding is just "a particular case of a general phenomenon: initiation into conceptual capacities" (McDowell 1996, 84). And precisely the inherently linguistic-normative character of experience is generally thought to be the central teaching of later Wittgenstein. That, however, seems to me a deep misunderstanding. Wittgenstein is constantly talking about language, but his basic point is that such things as our responses to another's pain or joy are "so many natural, instinctive kinds of behaviour *towards other human beings*, and our language is merely an auxiliary to, and further extension of, *this relation*" (Z §545, emphases added). The very teaching of language presupposes that child and adult already understand each other: the adult recognises that the child is looking at something, is delighted or frightened by it; the child recognises that the adult is *addressing her* rather than just making noise, etc. This recognition and understanding of one person by the other cannot be brought about by the use of signs; it must be there for child and adult to be able to engage in games of using signs (words). As A. W. Schlegel noted, long ago, "Not even the desire to communicate could be communicated if, before any agreed upon understanding takes place, humans did not already understand each other" (Quoted in Mueller-Vollmer 2000: 172). This, it seems to me, is the main point that emerges from the discussions of language in Wittgenstein's later work, too.

Now, the thing to emphasise is that hearing the address in the adult's voice is about the child's being open to and moved by the love, the interest and concern for the child the adult expresses. It is only because the child hears *that* in the words that they are of any concern to it; are not mere irrelevant sound. When two adults talk in neutral tones of voice in the presence of a young child, but not *to* it, the child pays no attention, but if the adults start fighting, the child listens up; not because it understands what the fight is about, but because, in its openness to and concern for the adults, it understands there *is* a fight. The child hears and is frightened by the anger in the voices, for, as Wittgenstein would say, although it as yet has not mastered language, it already has a *soul*, i.e. is inescapably affected by others; cares about them and about its relation to them.[18] Certainly, language and the kind of reflection that only becomes possible with it shape and deepen the inner life of the soul, allow us to unfold our full humanity. But even the deepest, most reflective inner life remains an articulate expression – and pervasively also, if not necessarily, a repression – of the responsive openness to others we share with the child we once were.[19]

---

[18] "Anyone with a soul must be capable of pain, joy, grief, etc. etc. And if he is also to be capable of memory, of making decisions, of making a plan for something, with this he needs linguistic expression" (LW II: 67). Hannes Nykänen pointed me to this passage; discussion with him clarified for me the crucial point at stake here, and in later Wittgenstein's thinking as a whole.

[19] This would be one way of formulating the point of Wittgenstein's discussion of the idea of "private language" which, in deconstructing the fantasy of an inner, essentially private determining of the sense of one's

The child's responsiveness to the parents' love and concern – and, *as an aspect of this*, to their anger and destructiveness – is itself ethical, in a sense both broad and precise. Our inescapable sense of the other and of ourselves in our relation to them *is* our "moral sense", or conscience. It isn't a metaphysically mysterious "faculty", nor is it based on internalised social norms. Rather, it's manifest in our spontaneous responses to the good and evil we indeed *sense*, e.g. when we're warmed by another's smile or chilled by their callousness. While affective, these are not blind reactions but modes of *understanding*; one perceives and opens oneself to the openness expressed in the other's smile, while one is saddened by the way they, in their callousness, shut themselves to oneself and others. These aren't "merely psychological" responses irrelevant to the "ideal" demands of morality; if we weren't touched and moved in these ways, if we lacked the understanding manifest in them, there wouldn't *be* any morality. This is the sense in which ethics is, as early Wittgenstein suggested but couldn't adequately explain, a "transcendental condition" of our world rather than a fact *in* it (TLP 6.421; NB 24.7.16). That is, the ethical is not some added layer of merely subjective or cultural "evaluation" of reality, nor some isolable "sphere" of life, but the very heart of our understanding of self and other, the very form of human intelligibility. In this sense, it can also be called absolute; we can neither get rid of it nor derive it from anything else.

Wittgenstein's later work, apparently silent about moral matters, arguably revolves around this radical insight. Consider, for example, the famous remark that, in relating to someone, "I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul" but rather "My attitude towards him is an attitude [*Einstellung*] towards a soul" (PI II: 178). What is at stake here can be brought out by noting, among other things, that no alternative is conceivable. Whatever we do in response to others – and not just to human beings but even to "a wriggling fly" – including the opinions we may form about them, manifests the fact that we are related to another living being; "All our reactions are different" (PI §284). These reactions, say compassionately tending someone in pain, are "primitive" in the sense that they are "not the result of thought" but instead provide the "prototype[s]" for our ways of thinking (Z §§540–1). That is: they aren't based on some prior, morally neutral, merely cognitive grasp of the other; rather, our understanding of each other is fundamentally affective and non-neutral. Thus, if someone watches another's suffering with what appears complete indifference, we don't see this as simple, neutral indifference (there is no such option), but as extreme callousness, torpor or some kind of pathology (cf. PO: 383). This connects with early Wittgenstein's concern with what can and cannot be *said* in ethics, insofar as one aspect of the inescapable non-neutrality of human understanding is that we cannot meaningfully claim, e.g., that "compassion is good", as though

---

experience, ties the sense of our words, including those spoken inwardly, to natural – i.e. spontaneously understood – expressions (of sensations, emotions, etc.) within a relationship (PI §244 ff.).

expressing a judgment people might agree or disagree with. For the sense of "good", our understanding of what is meant by calling anything (morally) good, is *given in* our very openness to each other, i.e. in compassion and kindred responses, such as joy in the company of others and the longing felt for them in their absence. In terms of the famous *Tractarian* distinction (cf. TLP 4.121–1212), it cannot be *said* what good and evil are; rather, all our responses *show* it.

Does this make ethics, good and evil, "natural" or "supernatural"? That question seems to have no clear sense, for it operates with an inherently unclear, metaphysical contrast. What is clear, though, is that ethics isn't natural in the sense of "something science might explain", for all scientific and other understanding of human life presupposes the ethical openness between us. And it also isn't a product or aspect of the "second nature" socialisation engenders, for, again, all socialisation presupposes it. Is it supernatural, then? I don't know. It reveals itself, one might say, as the very life of our life. Whatever we do manifests the openness between us. We cannot but respond in *some* way to this openness, and the sense, character and significance of our responses comes from their being responses to it – as illustrated by the non-neutrality of "indifference" to another's suffering or, to revert to an earlier example, by the way irritation itself reveals what (namely, the other) one blinds oneself to in it.

We cannot, then, *decide* the *meaning* of our responses. And yet, no particular response is forced, or automatically extracted, from us. Basically, we can respond in two ways. We can affirm the openness we, in a certain sense, *are*, which means freely opening oneself, welcoming the other – or we can try to close ourselves to this openness in rejecting the other, hardening our hearts. The former response I would characterise as love of neighbour, or, simply, as love; neither "romantic" infatuation (however passionate), nor mere benevolence (however self-sacrificing), but love itself, whether between lovers, kin or the strangers whom love makes "neighbours". The alternative is egocentric destructiveness in one or other of its myriad forms; envy, vindictiveness, self-pity, lust for power, etc. From love's perspective, the distinction between these two basic modes or directions of response *is* the distinction between good and evil, and as my earlier remarks intimated, that distinction doesn't correspond in any straightforward way with what various collective moralities (*or* their "personal" variants) *call* good or evil. Indeed, the various catalogues of culturally sanctioned virtues, including, most basically, the general desire to be what is considered a moral person, i.e. to gain respectability and moral good standing (decency, honour, etc.), can themselves be read as catalogues of forms of egocentric destructiveness. An attitude's being socially approved of course *means* that it isn't generally *seen as* egocentric, but in fact egocentricity (selfishness) isn't a contrast to identifying with collective norms and valuations, but presupposes such identification. Thus, thieves steal things that *everyone* is after, and the selfishness and destructiveness of the "legitimate" businessman's attitude to

other people may be as great as that of the criminal, even if he uses money rather than guns to get his way.[20]

A crucial point here is that there is an *asymmetry* between the loving and destructive responses to openness. Love's affirmation of openness countenances no destructiveness, and also doesn't depend on it, whereas destructiveness is inescapably dependent on the very openness it tries to deny. This makes destructive attitudes essentially ambivalent, self-deceptively self-undermining, as the example of irritation illustrated. Obviously, this doesn't mean that it's impossible to be (say) irritated; I'm making a point about *what it is to be* irritated. In general: to underline the inescapable openness between us doesn't mean denying or downplaying our destructiveness, but placing it in proper perspective; that is, showing destructiveness as itself a response – an inescapably ambivalent one – to openness.

Consider, again, witnessing a child being bullied; *in* seeing this you know you're called to help, even if you don't know how. "Conscience", one might say, names that in you that is alive to the plight of the bullied child, to the fear and suffering of someone abandoned by those who turn on her; this compassionate suffering with the child is your *mode* of knowing you have to help. You may open yourself to the child in the compassion you feel, or you may close yourself, harden your heart – perhaps moved by fear for your safety or social standing (suppose the adult community sides with the bullies against that "dirty foreigner's kid"), or by your secretly sharing in the evil thrill of bullying, in which one enjoys the irresponsible, collective power of hacking down on a defenceless victim. But bullying would obviously have no *point*; there would be no evil *thrill* in it, were the bullies themselves not alive to the plight of their victim, in a certain sense intimately identified with her; her frightened, forlorn responses giving them their evil satisfaction. This very identification is the repressed secret of their illusory, ambivalent and anxiety-ridden sense of power and safety in *not* being (for the moment) this helpless wretch they are busy turning their victim into.

Relating this discussion to the question of the destructive aspect of collective morality, we can note that whole cultural practices may be imbued with the evil spirit of bullying; in fact, its ominous shadow forever hovers over social life, ever again bursting forth in full terror (Backström and Nykänen 2016; cf. Girard 2001). This is a central, but seldom commented on theme in Wittgenstein's *Remarks on Frazer*. A "sinister spirit" pervades certain rituals, Wittgenstein says, which isn't explained by their possible origin in human

[20] Following the lead of Nykänen (2002), Backström (2007) is an extended meditation on what love involves, and on how different moral life, including our supposed virtues and highest values, looks when seen in the light of the openness of love. – Wittgenstein seldom writes about love explicitly, but there are some striking exceptions. A remark from 1944, for instance, speaks of "opening one's heart" in love instead of "contracting it" as a human being's only way out of "ultimate distress" (CV: 46).

sacrifice; rather, actual sacrifice is understandable as an extreme development of that spirit, somewhat as, when "seeing a man speaking harshly to someone else over a trivial matter, and noticing from his tone of voice and facial expression that this man can on occasion be frightening", his words can make a "much deeper and extraordinarily more serious" impression (RF: 75–7).[21] The rituals express something sinister that "lies in the character of these people [who participate in the rituals] themselves", just as it impresses itself on *us* because it "appeal[s] to a tendency in ourselves" (RF: 66; cf. 77). Wittgenstein doesn't, then, assume a generally *reverential* attitude towards primitive rituals, as many appear to think, nor does he object to Frazer's confusedly "explanatory" approach to them on abstractly methodological grounds, but because Frazer and the rationalistic, scientistic culture he represents – along, unfortunately, with most of our moral philosophy – pushes from view the darkness that is *in us*, blunting our sense of its evil pervasiveness, just as it blunts our wonder at goodness, at the love between people (CV: 5; 40). The attraction, the false comfort of approaches like Frazer's derives from this self-obfuscation and, in a closely related way, from their obscuring how our deepest difficulties in understanding others are characteristically ethical, i.e. connected with unwillingness to own the good *and* the evil we share with them.[22]

4. Moral difficulties: chatter defending against change

As my remarks in the previous section intimate, the relative dimension of culturally evolved moral practices with their values, norms and standards can be properly understood only in its complex and conflicted *interplay* with the ethical dimension of our openness to each other. Whereas measuring actions or situations against predetermined standards is often a plain, factual matter (cf. LE: 6–7), a closer look at everyday standard-relative *moral* talk reveals it as anything but plain, and quite different from merely factual talk. Consider an example discussed by Wittgenstein: a bitter disagreement over the priority of invention (CV: 58). This has a plainly factual aspect; one might determine when papers describing the invention were written, say. But the *moral* aspect of the disagreement cannot be derived from or resolved by appeal to such facts. Rather, it concerns the attitude the parties take to the disagreement and to each

[21] Cf. Wittgenstein's striking letter to Piero Sraffa (Oct. 10, 1947, GBW/CC), in whose demeanour he had glimpsed such a "sinister spirit."

[22] Cf. Wittgenstein's remarks on what a child's crying reveals of the childish soul (and so of one's own) if one dares to listen (CV: 2), and on typically thoughtless responses to the suffering of "idiots" (CV: 55). – Diamond (2000: 169–71) discusses the reality of evil and the sinister spirit, but without explicitly thematising them as what they are: difficulties in our relationships to each other. This crucial omission leaves her suggestive remarks curiously abstract, similarly to early Wittgenstein's ethical discussions. – Perhaps I should add that placing the relation to the other centre stage, ethically speaking, doesn't mean ignoring the relation to oneself or to the world, but rather seeing the significance of the latter two in the light of the former.

other, which is connected, centrally, to their degree of honesty and to the place they give worldly success in their lives; the various private and collective expectations they have invested in their invention; their envy, vanity and pride, their greed and vindictiveness, etc. If no such problematic elements were present, the disagreement would indeed be a purely factual one, and the parties could simply await expert decision on the question of priority. That *would* be a simple matter of agreed upon standards (scientific, legal etc.) reasonably applied to facts. By contrast, that the situation becomes morally charged *means* that troublesome attitudes such as envy appear. That is when disagreement turns into a quarrel, which means that both parties blame the other, in more or less moralised terms, for causing the quarrel and for misrepresenting the situation. Both will appeal to standards of decency that the other accuses them of flouting. This illustrates the deep irony of appealing to shared moral standards as protection against subjective arbitrariness and relativism in ethics, for moral standards get invoked most urgently precisely at points of conflict where, far from deciding anything, the very disagreement is framed in their terms.

Wittgenstein often insists on the point that, in ethical matters, there is no neutral position from which to *determine* who is right when people disagree; "Here, nothing more can be *established*, I can only appear as a person speaking for myself" (Waismann 1965: 16, emphasis added; cf. Rhees 1965). This doesn't mean, however, nor does Wittgenstein say so – even if he often *seems* to say it, and his commentators often seem to think he says so – that one person's moral understanding cannot be truer than another's. What we should consider is the question *why* one party's view of the situation is rejected by the other as preposterous, and we should do so in the light of Wittgenstein's observation that because of the contrast between understanding something and "what most people *want* to see [...] the very things which are most obvious may become the hardest of all to understand" (CV: 17). This remark is seldom quoted in discussions of Wittgenstein and ethics, but the point it makes is absolutely crucial for understanding the character of moral difficulties. The point is that the interminability and violence of moral disagreement need not show that moral truth is doubtful, relative, or hard to find; on the contrary, the desperate violence of its denial may be due precisely to the truth being impossible to escape – but also, apparently, to endure in lucid recognition. One refuses to look at what hurts one's eyes.

The difficulty in life-problems, in moral disputes and moral difficulties generally – and in philosophical difficulties, insofar as they are bound up with these – is that one has to *change*; perhaps change the whole direction of one's life, or "just" (but even that can feel quite impossible) drop one's resentment over some trivial slight, say. From this perspective, one can make sense of the enigmatic *Tractatus*-remark that "the solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem" (TLP 6.521). For the problems I, in my resentment, take myself to have – how to get back at you for the slight, or how to control my temper in

your company, say – aren't the real problem, and "solving" *them* (finding a way to get even, etc.) leaves the real problem untouched. That problem is my resentment itself, or rather the whole orientation to life and to you that manifests itself in the resentment I feel. However, it is only if and when I change my orientation that I'm able fully to feel the destructive futility of my resentment and of the self-centredness and pettiness manifested in my focus on personal prestige; a futility that may, to be sure, have been clear to me *intellectually*, i.e. as a mere confession of the lips. But if I change, the resentment really vanishes. I haven't realized how to solve my supposed problems; rather, *I* have changed so that *those* problems are no longer there, as earlier they seemed to me to be. As Wittgenstein says, "The way to solve the problem you see in life is to live in a way that will make what is problematic disappear" (CV: 27; cf. 53; cf. Christensen 2011: 796–9).

The fact that particular resentments arise within and gain their apparent importance from one's general orientation to life with others illustrates how, in moral difficulties, separating the "small" tasks from the "big" one, the problems of life from the *problem* of life (singular), is only apparently possible. That is: changes in ethical orientation are not limited to, containable within, this or that particular act or fact, e.g. my giving up just *this* resentment, just *here*. Such isolated changes only mark accidental rearrangements in the configuration of private inclination and local circumstance; for instance, something you did suddenly reminded me, in a flattering or sentimental light, of myself, and so my resentment changed into sympathy. That isn't moral insight; my sympathy is no better than my resentment, just a change of mood within an abiding self-centredness (and remember: self-centredness isn't a contrast to identifying with collective norms and valuations, but presupposes such identification). By contrast, a moral insight, a change away from self-centredness, won't just show in one case, but in how one's orientation as a whole changes. This means that while one always frees oneself from self-centredness, opens one's heart, in relation to real human beings of flesh and blood – opening oneself is no abstractly intellectual operation – the meaning and "effects" of opening up aren't restricted to this or that particular person or situation. The protagonist in one of Nick Hornby's novels (2004), who falls in love with a woman for the first time shortly after having uncharacteristically befriended an adolescent boy, reflects: "Once you open your door to one person, anybody can come in". This is the peculiar universality, the wholeheartedness, of love, quite unlike the universality of a principle subsuming all cases falling under it. Obviously, this universality doesn't *guarantee* that the person who opens up to another will be as loving in his dealings with others, or indeed in later dealings with the person he opened up to; love's transformative understanding can be pushed back as resentment and other egocentric attitudes flare up again. Nonetheless, the opening up of understanding in itself isn't a reorientation restricted to particular people in particular situations as opposed to others. Any such restriction would reveal a private/collective preference or agenda, hence self-centredness of some

kind, whereas the heart of moral understanding, regardless of its particular setting, lies in opening oneself to the other wholeheartedly, without agenda or preference (cf. Backström 2007: 258–297).

Now, as Wittgenstein says, the "difficulties of the will" (CV: 17) in which our ethical difficulties consist – or, as I would rather say, the frantic activity of willing (including refusing, not-willing) that our difficulties with wholeheartedness engenders – have an "intellectual" side insofar as they are bound up with unwillingness to *understand* one's situation aright. Thus, the sentimental see life in a false light, but are just as blind to their sentimentality as the cynical are to their cynicism; neither will admit that their difficulty is the same fear of love, whose lucid desire is neither sentimental nor cynical. *Facts* can't prove them wrong, for they see all facts in a false (cynical or sentimental) light. Moral difficulties do concern facts, one might say, insofar as they are about what actually transpires between people, but the difficulty is that one's own level of moral truthfulness determines what one sees, or can acknowledge. And this problem arises in philosophy and empirical research no less than in everyday life, which is why neither philosophical argument nor observations of human behaviour will ever *decide* anything in ethics. In other words, the difficulty of reaching a truthful view of life is itself a *moral* difficulty, for it demands that one change, giving up one's cynicism or sentimentality, or whatever other self-centred and destructive spirit one has allowed oneself to indulge and serve.

But insofar as one *will not* change, will not open up, one will refuse to see even the need, or the possibility, of change; one denies being resentful or insists that one "can't do anything about one's feelings", etc. Morally speaking, the difficulty isn't "to know what's right" – as we often self-deceptively present it in real-life situations, and as moral philosophers have tended to present the difficulty of moral understanding generally – but to open oneself to the other, which entails that one stops lying to oneself about how, in resentment, self-pity, disgust, etc., one closed one's heart to them. This doesn't necessarily tell one what to *do* in the situation in practical terms, for instance how best to help someone in need. But the *moral* difficulty was never about practicalities. It consisted, for example, in one's not really wanting to help, perhaps because the other disgusted one or provoked one's envy, and this unwillingness was self-deceptively projected into arguments for not helping; "He doesn't deserve help", "Nothing can be done", etc. Opening up to the other dissolves the disgust/envy, and along with it the moralistic and would-be practical pseudo-problems, so that one is finally able to view the problem as a genuinely practical one of how best to help.[23]

[23] For more on the character of "moral dilemmas", see Backström (2007: 417–450), Nykänen (2015).

Precisely because the difficulty in moral difficulties consists in our own destructive attitudes and the self-deception (repression) they involve, intelligence and reasoning won't help us with them. As Wittgenstein says, "When you bump against the limits of your own honesty it is as though your thoughts get into a whirlpool, an infinite regress: You can *say* what you like, it takes you no further" (CV: 8). This means, equally, that you can *tell* someone who's reached the limits of their honesty what you like, it takes things no further. Talk in moral contexts isn't necessarily pointless, of course; people do change in response, partly, to having talked to others whose address and criticisms they at first indignantly rejected. But such talk doesn't have the form of argument or proof – or even of *persuasion*, insofar as that presupposes interlocutors already basically agreed on what the relevant considerations are, with only their relative weight and arrangement being in question. In real moral conflicts there is, rather, radical *refusal* to understand on at least one, and often on all, sides.

I wouldn't say that moral discussion is irrational, but also not, as Wittgenstein-inspired authors like Cavell (1979: 247 ff.), Christensen (2011) and Mulhall (1994) do, that rationality in moral argument is more fluid and open-ended than philosophers imagine. The crucial thing is rather to recognise, as I think Wittgenstein does, that moral conflicts and difficulties basically have nothing whatever to do with rationality – nor, therefore, with irrationality (which means lack of rationality where it could or should have been exhibited). The problem with callousness isn't that it's irrational or unreasonable to be callous. In the tautological terms to which one is reduced in trying to say what shows itself: the problem with callousness is its *callousness*. And the basic impossibility of conceiving the parties in morally charged exchanges as "*participants in a rational discourse*" (Habermas 1990: 66) is due to the fact that precisely if you're *right* that I act callously, or in some other destructive, evil way, then *I* cannot admit this. I cannot, unless I repent, and thus relent, but then I will stop *arguing*. Hence, the moral "argument" may stop, but it cannot really be *won*. You can talk to me; try to speak to my conscience, ask me to open my eyes to what I'm saying and doing, that is, open my heart to the victims of my callous actions. But if you imagine you can get me to open my heart through reasoning or reasonable persuasion, then what you say will be what my protestations of seeing nothing wrong with my behaviour are; mere self-deceptive "chatter", however solemn and argumentative their rhetorical form (cf. Waismann 1965: 13). – But note that speaking to someone's conscience has nothing to do with emotional manipulation (as in trying to induce guilt by hurt looks) any more than with reasoning. One isn't trying to *pressure* or *influence* the other, but speaking to her own heartfelt, but repressed moral understanding (cf. Backström [forthcoming]).

5. Expression, representation and the two dimensions of language

Let us now look at a further, closely related, aspect of moral sense, of the different roles words can be given in moral contexts and the difficulties this is connected with. Resolving the deepest philosophical confusions demands, Wittgenstein says, "a radical break with the idea that language always functions in *one* way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts – which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please" (PI §304). His own early view of ethics seemed to presuppose that very idea; denying that "absolute" ethical expressions conveyed thoughts, he denied them the status of sense-making language. Standard conceptions of ethics share the same basic view of language, but see no problem in ethical language-use conveying thoughts; describing, evaluating, prescribing, reasoning about such-and-such, etc. On the dominant, naturalist-cum-culturalist view (briefly sketched in Section 3), it is "our use of [publicly shared] moral concepts to describe our own, and one another's, behaviour which endows that behaviour with moral meaning, and thus brings it within the scope of the going moral 'grammar'" (Lovibond 1983: 63). This gives "the concept of *representation* [...] an essential role" (ibid.), for *which* moral thought is conveyed depends on how the behaviour is represented; was it, say, "brave" or rather "foolhardy"? And what one can represent at all depends on the possibilities of representation (the conceptuality) provided by the moral language(s) one speaks.

Now, the upshot of my discussion of later Wittgenstein's view of language was, as one might put it, that *representation presupposes relationship*; the relation subject-word-world, which so obsesses philosophers, rests on that between speakers. Standard accounts of both language and ethics ignore, or at least downplay this, however; that is a feature of the representational view of language Wittgenstein questions. Thus they ignore the basic moral question, which concerns precisely what is actually going on between us, what our real attitudes to each other are; not how one can, with some plausibility, *represent* our behaviour, or what it conventionally counts as or commits us to. Those are lawyer's questions. Alas, the need to hide our own destructiveness – both the various institutionalised forms of oppression and licence approved and demanded by our cultures, and the "private" variations on destructiveness we engage in – makes lawyers of us all; as I have explained, we pervasively make use of various moral representations to misrepresent the real moral significance of our actions and relationships. For this reason, one cannot understand the sense and dynamics of morally problematic, destructive speech/thinking by looking at the "moral judgments" ostensibly conveyed by it, but only by perceiving and exposing the manipulative, self-deceptive spirit carrying it. That is, one must focus on the *expressive and repressive* functions of language, just as Wittgenstein does (cf. Backström 2014).

Morally destructive situations and relationships are ones where interpersonal openness is repressed; the free flow of feeling and understanding between people, including the speech that would express and articulate the feeling-understanding, is in various ways blocked or perverted. Whether one uses more "rational" or "emotional" strategies of repression is a secondary matter; someone blocks a truthful confrontation by clever argumentation, another by bursting into tears. Whatever the case, destructive attitudes are never simply and directly expressed; no-one ever *says* they're envious, for example – anyway, not fully meaning it. Instead, one's *repressed* envy *shows*, is unwittingly revealed, in what one says and does; in moralistic backbiting, deprecating or self-pitying remarks about the other's "luck", Schadenfreude, etc. And this isn't just a matter of not expressing the envy outwardly, of not making it public. Rather, one's private envious thoughts show the same repressed character as one's speech to others; one doesn't admit one's envy even to oneself, rather one thinks thoughts "green" with envy; thoughts, however, which one feels – *represents* to oneself – as righteous indignation or as something else, but in any case not as envy. In short: like other destructive, self-centred responses, envy is self-deceptive and ambivalent; an *essentially misfelt* feeling (cf. the earlier discussion of irritation, and Backström [forthcoming]). Acknowledging one's envy, or any other evil truthfully, without evasion and excuses of any kind, is possible only in repentant forgiveness. Only when one finally rids oneself of the evil in opening oneself to the other can one stop pretending to oneself it wasn't there. Before that, what one said was designed to hide the evil, not show it, although one unwittingly revealed it nonetheless, to those with eyes to see – that is, to those who don't share in, and so don't need to turn a blind eye, to the evil.

With *morally good, truthful speech* – and in moral contexts there is, *pace* Nietzsche, no third, morally neutral alternative "beyond good and evil" – we must likewise focus on the expressive rather than the representing function of language. The important point is the crucial asymmetry between the mode of expressivity in good and in destructive speech; namely, that the good is not tied to repression, and so *can* be simply and fully expressed, rather than just unwittingly shown. For instance, one can say and fully mean "Forgive me!" One can do so, that is, *insofar as* one longs for forgiveness – and that longing is itself a form, or face, of love; the face it shows one who turns back to those he had deserted. Indeed, only expressions of openness such as this *can* be fully, in the sense of wholeheartedly, meant. For while destructive speech can be extremely intense – think of a hateful outburst of deep envy – it is self-deceptive and ambivalent, hence never wholehearted. And merely factual, practical or intellectual speech doesn't, plain deception aside, raise any questions about whether one wholeheartedly means it (cf. "What's the time?" – "5 o'clock" – "Do you *really mean* that?").

If you say "Forgive me!" your words and demeanour aren't "endowed with moral meaning" (Lovibond) through your description of what you do as "asking for forgiveness", through the declaration that *that* is what you're doing. Of course, you utilise the conventionally assigned meanings of the words you speak – in this case, the English sentence "Forgive me!" Unless you know Finnish, you won't understand that "Saat anteeksi", means "I forgive you". However, you may well understand, from looking into my face and from your sense of me and of what went on between us before, that those strange sounds express forgiveness. That is, forgiveness may come to pass between us even if we lack a common language, in the conventional sense. And even if we stick to the English we both understand, the truth and meaning of any words either of us offers regarding our falling out and reconciliation depends, morally speaking, on whether we really long for forgiveness, or, instead, in one way or another reject and evade open, truthful, loving contact (cf. PI §544). Insofar as there is love between us, it won't only be spoken in a "Forgive me!", but will show in an open-ended way in everything said and done; as desire to help and understand, to be with the other, to confront and challenge them if need be, etc. Love and forgiveness are eminently expressible, then; indeed, they *are* the very longing for a wholehearted openness in which "nothing is hidden" and there is nothing of which one "cannot" speak (for these famous tropes, see PI §435; TLP 7).

It remains true, however, that nothing can be said about the nature and the goodness of love and forgiveness in terms of "reasons", "explanations" or "justifications". In those terms, one *can* discuss the appropriateness and advisability of offering or accepting *apologies*, compensation and a normalisation of the relationship, etc. But forgiveness exists in a wholly different dimension, precisely because it is a face of love, i.e. is about *opening one's heart*. Thus, in accepting an apology grudgingly one has indeed accepted an apology, but in saying "I forgive you!" grudgingly one has *not forgiven*, one has only, out of whatever motive, played at forgiving. This shows a sense in which apologies, unlike forgiveness, are elements of *public* language-use, are "performatives" with particular "felicity conditions" (cf. Austin 1962). If you utter certain words in a certain situation you count as having apologised, and that's what apologising *means*. By contrast, there is nothing by virtue of which you *count* as having forgiven, although there is certainly such a thing as having forgiven – and also, of course, countless ways of self-deceptively imagining that one has forgiven when one hasn't. In short, there are no criteria for forgiveness; it's real but has no representation.[24]

[24] For more on forgiveness, see Backström (2007: 216–27) and Nykänen (2015), whose discussion has provided a basic orientation for my own thinking not only about forgiveness but with regard to the understanding of the moral-relational core of language generally.

If one thinks of language-use in terms of public performances, language-games played according to certain (perhaps largely implicit and uncodifiable) rules – including, centrally, the game of representing things *as* this or that – one will be unable to make sense of moral dynamics, that is, of what it means to hurt another or be hurt by them, to be unforgiving or long for forgiveness, etc.[25] Even in the case of apologies, their *moral* interest, that is, the emotional-existential charge and difficulty that often attends them and is manifest for instance in the grudgingness with which they may be uttered and accepted, cannot be understood by focusing on the public rules and conditions of their performance, just as little as the bitterness of the quarrel over priority of invention could be understood by looking at the rules regulating intellectual property, or the spirit of someone's actions seen by looking at the "content" of the norms by which they order, or the reasons they offer in justification of, their behaviour. Rather, the dynamics of the relationship between us, the speakers, gives our life with words its ethical meaning. As I have explained, that relationship is inescapable, and inescapably ethical, in the sense of the openness felt in conscience. And it is because our words are spoken within that ethical relationship, within the ongoing conflict in which we stand between welcoming and struggling against the openness to the other that we inescapably *are*, that they have the *kind* of meaning they have, wholly different from the "flat" meaning proper to symbols of a formal language or moves in a board game; a difference manifest, as Wittgenstein notes, in the fact that words can be "*hard* to say", or, again, can be "wrung from us – like a cry" (PI §546).

6. Conclusion: a desperate denial of sense

Most philosophers explicitly or implicitly identify ethics with culturally formed norms, language with public discourse, and moral understanding with the practice of reason-giving – a practice essentially cultural and public even when engaged in silently, *in foro interno*. To them, my argument, which I believe indicates the most radical direction in Wittgenstein's later thinking, will probably seem to reduce us to speaking some imaginary "private language" of the heart – like Kierkegaard's knight of faith who, "relat[ing] himself as the single individual absolutely to the absolute [...] cannot make himself understandable to anyone" (1983: 70–

[25] But didn't Wittgenstein himself constantly speak of language-games and rule-following; isn't that his main contribution to the philosophical understanding of language? Well, he certainly put the metaphors of "games" and "rules" to excellent work against certain other pictures of language – e.g., the picture of meaning as an "inner" process in the mind or the brain. Nonetheless, speaking of "games" and "rules" is just another picture, useful as an "object of comparison" that can "throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities"; and Wittgenstein himself insists that we shouldn't turn it into "a preconceived idea to which reality *must* correspond" (PI §130–1; cf. the whole §§127–133). What I am pointing to in the text is a fundamental dimension of language and ethics that the game-picture doesn't, and wasn't meant, to illuminate – as *other* Wittgenstein-remarks do.

1). In Wittgenstein's *Lecture*, which was likely inspired by Kierkegaard (cf. Waismann 1965: 12–13), one finds something like this picture – although it's unclear how Wittgenstein ultimately regarded the picture, even in 1929 (cf. Section 2). I have argued that his later thought allows us to free ourselves from this picture with its false either-or of *private (nonsense) or public (sense)*, and to see the way in which one person addresses another – and each person indeed addresses each other, regardless of private or collective preoccupations – as the very heart of ethics. There is nothing nonsensical or incommunicably private about this openness; it is the *repression* of openness that perverts and destroys sense and isolates one person from the other. But openness also has nothing to do with the reasonable and representational; with the public and performative; that is, with the whole discourse of cultural, collective moralities – other than in the sense that *that* whole discourse is a response, largely destructive and repressively self-deceptive, to the openness. In the openness of love one isn't alone; one is there with the other. Between "you" and "I" there are no norms, no standards, and no public discourse. But there is speech, and there is sense; the sense we have of and make to each other, one human being to another. There is a complication, however, for this wholehearted opening of oneself to the other is the most fearful thing there is. Thus, both everyday moral life and moral philosophy are pervaded and perverted by our desperate attempts, private and collective, to deny, limit and misrepresent the limitless possibilities of sense we feel opening up between us.

References

Austin, J. L., 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ayer, A. J., 1964/1936. *Language, Truth and Logic*. London: Victor Gollancz.

Backström, J., 2007. *The Fear of Openness: An Essay on Friendship and the Roots of Morality*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press.

Backström, J., 2011. "Wittgenstein and the moral dimension of philosophical problems". In: O. Kuusela and M. McGinn, eds. 2011. *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 729–752.

Backström, J., 2013. "Wittgenstein, follower of Freud". In: Y. Gustafsson, C. Kronqvist and H. Nykänen, eds. 2013. *Ethics and the Philosophy of Culture: Wittgensteinian Approaches.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Backström, J., 2014. "Touchy subjects: The theme of repression in Freud and Wittgenstein". *European Journal of Psychoanalysis* 2/2014. Published online at http://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/ – print version forthcoming.

Backström, J., 2015. "Of dictators and green-grocers: On the repressive grammar of values-discourse". *Ethical Perspectives* 22, pp. 39–67.

Backström, J., Forthcoming. "Hiding from love: The repressed insight in Freud's account of morality". In: R. Gipps and M. Lacewing, eds. Forthcoming. *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Backström, J. and Nykänen, H., 2016. "Collectivity, evil and the dynamics of moral value". *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice* 22, pp. 466–476.

Baum, W., 1979. "Wittgenstein und die Religion". *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 86, pp. 272-99.

Buber, M., 2002. *Das dialogische Prinzip.* 9. Auflage. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus.

Cahill, K., 2004. "Ethics and the *Tractatus*: A Resolute Failure". *Philosophy* 79, pp. 33–55.

Christensen, A.-M. S., 2011. "Wittgenstein and Ethics". In: O. Kuusela and M. McGinn, eds. 2011. *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 796–817.

Cavell , S., 1979. *The Claim of Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Conant, J., 1998. "Wittgenstein on Meaning and Use". *Philosophical Investigations* 21, pp. 222–250.

Conant, J., 2006. "Wittgenstein's Later Criticism of the *Tractatus*". In: A. Pichler and S. Säätelä, eds. 2006. *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*. Vienna: Ontos Verlag, pp. 172–204.

Diamond, C., 2000. "Ethics, Imagination and the Method of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*". In: A. Crary and R. Read, eds. 2000. *The New Wittgenstein*. London: Routledge, pp. 149–173.

Dilman, I., 1974. "Wittgenstein on the Soul". In: G. Vesey, ed. 1974. *Understanding Wittgenstein*. London: Macmillan, pp. 162–192.

Donatelli, P., 2005. "The Problem of 'The Higher' in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*". In: D. Z. Phillips, ed. 2005. *Religion and Wittgenstein's Legacy.* Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 11–38.

Drury, M. O'C., 1984. "Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein" and "Conversations with Wittgenstein". In: R. Rhees, ed. 1984. *Recollections of Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 76–171.

Friedlander, E., 2001. *Signs of Sense: Reading Wittgenstein's* Tractatus. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Gaita, R., 2004. *Good and Evil: An Absolute Conception. Second Edition.* London: Routledge.

Girard, R., 2001. *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Greene, J. D., 2014. *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them*. London: Penguin.

Habermas, J., 1990. *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Trans. C. Lenhardt and S.W. Nicholsen. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Hacker, P. M. S., 1986. *Insight and Illusion. Second edition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Haidt, J., 2001. "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment". *Psychological Review* 108, pp. 814–834.

Herman, B., 2007. *Moral Literacy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Holland, R. F., 1980. "Is Goodness a mystery?". In: R. F. Holland, *Against Empiricism: On Education, Epistemology and Value*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, pp. 92–109.

Hornby, N., 2004. *About a Boy*. London: Penguin.

Johnston, P., 2014/1989. *Wittgenstein and Moral Philosophy*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Kierkegaard, S., 1983. *Fear and Trembling.* In: *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*. Ed. and trans. H.V. and E.H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kremer, M., 2004. "To What Extent is Solipsism a Truth?" In: Barry Stocker, ed. 2004. *Post-Analytic Tractatus*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 59–84.

Levinas, E., 1981. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Trans. A. Lingis. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Levinas, E., 1985. *Ethics and Infinity. Conversations with Philippe Nemo*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Levy, D., 2007. "Wittgenstein's Philosophical Work on Ethics". In: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lecture on Ethics. Introduction, Interpretation and Complete Text*. Ed. E. Zamuner, E.V. Di Lascio and D. Levy. Macerata: Quodlibet

Little, M. O., 2001. "Wittgensteinian Lessons on Moral Particularism". In: C. Elliott, ed. 2001. *Slow Cures and Bad Philosophers*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 161–180.

Lovibond, S., 1983. *Realism and Imagination in Ethics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lovibond, S., 2002. *Ethical Formation*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Malcolm, N., 1958. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*. With a Biographical Sketch by G. H. Von Wright. London: Oxford University Press.

McDowell, J., 1996. *Mind and World – With a New Introduction*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

McDowell, J., 1998. *Mind, Value, and Reality*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

McDowell, J., 2009. *The Engaged Intellect: Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

McGuiness, B. F., 1966. "The mysticism of the *Tractatus*". *The Philosophical Review* 75, pp. 305–328.

McManus, D., 2006. *The Enchantment of Words: Wittgenstein's* Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Mueller-Vollmer, K., 2000. "Language Theory and the Art of Understanding". In: Marshall Brown, ed. 2000. *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Vol. 5: Romanticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 162–184.

Mulhall, S., 1994. "Liberalism, Morality and Rationality: MacIntyre, Rawls and Cavell". In: J. Horton and S. Mendus, eds. 1994. *After MacIntyre*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 205–224.

Nussbaum, M., 2001. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy. Rev. Ed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nykänen, H., 2002. *The 'I', the 'You' and the Soul. An Ethics of Conscience*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press.

Nykänen, H., 2014. "Conscience and Collective Pressure". *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 21, pp. 51–65.

Nykänen, H., 2015. "Repression and Moral Reasoning: An Outline of a New Approach in Ethical Understanding". *Sats* 16, pp. 49–66.

Overgaard, S., 2007. “The ethical residue of language in Levinas and early Wittgenstein”. *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 33, pp. 223–249.

Phillips, D. Z., 1992. *Interventions in Ethics*. London: Macmillan.

Railton, P., 2004. “Toward an Ethics that Inhabits the World”. In: B. Leiter, ed. 2004. *The Future for Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 265–284.

Rawls, J., 1977. “The Basic Structure as Subject”. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14, pp. 159–65.

Redpath, T., 1972. “Wittgenstein and Ethics.” In: A. Ambrose and M. Lazerowitz, eds. 1972. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophy and Language*. London: George Allen & Unwin, pp. 95–119.

Rhees, R., 1965. “Some Developments in Wittgenstein’s View of Ethics”. *The Philosophical Review* 74, pp. 17–26.

Rhees, R., 1990. “Ethical Reward and Punishment”. In: R. Gaita, ed. 1990. *Value and Understanding: Essays for Peter Winch*. London: Routledge, pp. 179–193.

Richter, D., 2004. *Wittgenstein at His Word*. New York: Continuum.

Ryan, A., 1993. “Reasons of the Heart”. *NYRB*, September 23, pp. 52–5.

Taylor, C., 1985. “The Concept of a Person”. In: Taylor, *Philosophical Papers I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 97–114.

Theunissen, M., 1977. *Der Andere. Studien zur Sozialontologie der* Gegenwart. Zweite, um eine Vorrede vermehrte Auflage. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Waismann, F., 1965. “Notes on Talks with Wittgenstein”. *Philosophical Review* 74, pp. 12–16.

Walker, J., 1968. “Wittgenstein’s Earlier Ethics”. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 5, pp. 219–232.

Wallace, R. J., 1996. *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Velleman, J. D., 2006. *Self to Self. Selected Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wiggins, D., 2004. “Wittgenstein on Ethics and the Riddle of Life”. *Philosophy* 79, pp. 363–391.

Winch, P., 1972. *Ethics and Action*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Winch, P., 1987. *Trying to Make Sense*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L., 1951. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* Trans. C.K. Ogden. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. (TLP)

Wittgenstein, L., 1958. *Philosophical Investigations.* Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell. (PI)

Wittgenstein, L., 1965. “A Lecture on Ethics.” *Philosophical Review* 74, pp. 3–12. (LE)

Wittgenstein, L., 1978. *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology & Religious Belief*. Ed. Cyril Barrett. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. (LA)

Wittgenstein, L., 1979. *Notebooks: 1914–1916*. Ed. G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Second ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. (NB)

Wittgenstein, L., 1979. “Remarks on Frazer’s *Golden Bough*”. Trans. J. Beversluis. In: C.G. Luckhardt (ed.), *Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 61–81. (RF)

Wittgenstein, L., 1980. *Culture and Value.* Ed. G.H. von Wright in collaboration with H. Nyman. Trans. P. Winch. Oxford: Blackwell. (CV)

Wittgenstein, L., 1984. *Werksausgabe. In 8 Bänden*. Franfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp. (SS)

Wittgenstein, L., 1989. *Zettel*. Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. (Z)

Wittgenstein, L., 1992. Last *Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology, Vol II*. Ed. G.H. von Wright and H. Nyman. Trans. C.G. Luckhardt and M. Aue. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. (LW II)

Wittgenstein, L., 1999. *Philosophical Occasions*. Ed. J. C. Klagge and A. Nordman. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. (PO)

Wittgenstein, L., 2000. *Wittgenstein's* Nachlass*: The Bergen Electronic Edition*. Ed. by the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (BEE)

Wittgenstein, L., 2011. *Gesamtbriefwechsel/Complete Correspondence. Innsbrucker elektronische Ausgabe. 2nd Release*. Hrsg. von Monika Seekircher, Brian McGuinness, Anton Unterkircher. Im Auftrag des Forschungsinstituts Brenner-Archiv. (GBW/CC)

Wolz-Gottwald, E., 2001. "Wittgenstein – der Mystiker des Schweigens?" In: Gerhard Stamer, Hrsg. 2001. *Die Realität des Inneren: Der Einfluss der deutschen Mystik auf die deutsche Philosophie*. Amsterdam, New York, pp. 163–185.